Claims

[c1] A method of estimating an Internet user's geographic location, comprising:

  tracking the Internet user's visits to at least one Internet site promoting a business having a business geographic location thereby defining a visited Internet site;

  determining the business geographic location of the business promoted by the visited Internet site thereby defining a matched business location; and

  estimating the Internet user's geographic location to be at least adjacent to the matched business location.

[c2] The method as claimed in claim 1 further comprising providing a database having business geographic location information for a plurality of Internet sites.

[c3] The method as claimed in claim 2 wherein the business geographic location information is determined by an operator of each respective Internet site.

[c4] The method as claimed in claim 2 wherein the step of determining the business geographic location of the business promoted by the visited Internet site includes matching the visited Internet site to an Internet site in the database thereby defining a matched Internet site and defining the matched business location to be the respective business geographic

location of the matched Internet site.

[c5]   The method as claimed in claim 4 wherein the matched
         business location is determined by calculating the business
         geographic location most often matched.

[c6]   The method as claimed in claim 5 wherein the step of tracking
         the Internet user's visits to at least one Internet site having a
         business geographic location includes tracking the amount of
         time the Internet user remains on the Internet site.

[c7]   The method as claimed in claim 6 wherein the step of tracking
         the Internet user's visits to at least one Internet site having a
         business geographic location includes disposing a cookie
         having a unique identifier on a computer system that the
         Internet user is using to access the Internet.

[c8]   The method as claimed in claim 7 further comprising providing
         an Internet user database for recording the matched business
         location and correlating it to the cookie.

[c9]   A method of estimating an Internet user's geographic location,
         comprising:
                  providing a database having respective business
                  geographic location information for a plurality of Internet
                  sites;
                  tracking the Internet user's visits to a plurality of Internet
                  sites thereby defining a plurality of visited Internet sites;

matching at least one visited Internet site to an Internet site in the database thereby defining a matched business geographic location;

comparatively determining the matched business geographic location having the most matches thereby defining a most popular business geographic location; and

estimating the Internet user's geographic location to be adjacent to the most popular business geographic location.

[c10]   The method as claimed in claim 9 wherein an operator of the respective Internet site determines the business geographic location information.

[c11]   The method as claimed in claim 9 wherein the step of tracking the Internet user's visits to a plurality of Internet sites includes tracking the amount of time the Internet user remains on the Internet site.

[c12]   The method as claimed in claim 11 wherein the step of tracking the Internet user's visits to a plurality of Internet sites includes disposing a cookie having a unique identifier on a computer system that the Internet user is using to access the Internet.

[c13]   The method as claimed in claim 12 further comprising

providing an Internet user database for recording the most
popular business geographic location and correlating it to the
cookie.

[c14]   A system for estimating the geographic location of an Internet
user, comprising:

a database having respective business geographic
location information for a plurality of Internet sites;

a means for tracking Internet sites that the Internet users
visits, thereby defining a plurality of visited Internet sites;
and

a means for correlating the Internet user's geographic
location to the business geographic location information
obtained from the visited Internet sites.

[c15]   The system as claimed in claim 14 wherein the means for
tracking Internet sites includes disposing a cookie on a
computer system that the Internet user is using to access the
Internet.

[c16]   The system as claimed in claim 15 wherein the means for
estimating the Internet user's geographic location includes a
system for matching each visited Internet site with an Internet
site in the database and assigning each visited Internet site
the respective corresponding business geographic location
information for the matched Internet site in the database.

[c17]   The system as claimed in claim 16 wherein the means for estimating the Internet user's geographic location further includes a system for quantitatively determining a most popular geographic location.

[c18]   The system as claimed in claim 17 a means for estimating the Internet user's geographic location includes a system for estimating the Internet user's geographic location to be the most popular geographic location.

[c19]   A method of providing Internet search results based upon the estimated geographic location of an Internet user, comprising:

    providing a database having respective business geographic location information for a plurality of Internet sites;

    tracking the Internet user's visits to a plurality of Internet sites thereby defining a plurality of visited Internet sites;

    matching at least one visited Internet site to an Internet site in the database thereby defining a matched business geographic location;

    comparatively determining the matched business geographic location having the most matches thereby defining a most popular business geographic location;

    estimating the Internet user's geographic location to be adjacent to the most popular business geographic location thereby defining an Internet user location;

receiving an Internet search request from the Internet

search user; and

displaying search results for Internet sites having a

geographic business location adjacent to the Internet

user geographic location.

[c20]   The method as claimed in claim 19 wherein the step of

tracking the Internet user's visits to a plurality of Internet sites

includes disposing a cookie having a unique identifier on a

computer system that the Internet user is using to access the

Internet.

[c21]   The method as claimed in claim 20 further comprising

providing a database for recording the Internet user location

and correlating it to the cookie.

[c22]   The method as claimed in claim 19 wherein the step of

displaying search results for Internet sites having a geographic

business location adjacent to the Internet user location

includes prioritizing the search results based upon the amount

of money each respective Internet site is willing to pay for

being displayed.

[c23]   The method as claimed in claim 22 wherein the amount of

money each respective Internet site is willing to pay for being

displayed includes a pay-per-click bidding system.

[c24]   A method of displaying geographically relevant Internet search

results based upon the geographic location of an Internet user, comprising:

    providing a database having respective business geographic location information for a plurality of Internet sites;

    determining the geographic location of the Internet user;

    receiving an Internet search request from the Internet search user; and

    displaying search results for Internet sites having a geographic business location adjacent to the geographic location of the Internet user.

[c25]   The method as claimed in claim 24 wherein the step of providing a database having respective business geographic location information for a plurality of Internet sites includes allowing the Internet site operator specify the business geographic location information.

[c26]   The method as claimed in claim 24 wherein the step of determining the geographic location of the Internet user includes the Internet user manually specifying the geographic location of the Internet user.